



CIA []
United States Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

May 23, 1985

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

TO: The Files
FROM: INR/IC - Lucian Heichler ~~W~~
SUBJECT: The Search for Josef Mengele

At a meeting held on May 22, 1985 in Counselor Derwinsky's office, Ambassador Davis (Asuncion) and officials of the State and Justice Departments discussed plans to conduct an all-out, definitive search for Nazi war criminal Dr. Josef Mengele -- both the historical record and the man himself.

Since Ambassador Davis was delayed, the Counselor invited Deputy Assistant Attorney General Mark Richard to open the discussion. Richard explained that Justice has been tasked to undertake what he termed a two-tiered inquiry:

- (1) The historical aspects:
 - Evidence of USG involvement with Mengele, such as prior US custody of him, prior entries to and exits from the US;
 - Information on how Mengele had left Europe at the end of World War II, and any evidence of a USG role in his departure.
- (2) The search for Mengele:
 - Intelligence concerning Mengele's present whereabouts which could lead to his apprehension.

The first task has been given to Justice's Office of Special Investigations (OSI); the second to the US Marshals Service. Along with Justice and State, the Intelligence Community including the FBI and its Legal Attaches abroad, the CIA, and Defense Department intelligence agencies have been asked to assist. Defense alone has tasked about two dozen people to conduct the definitive search of military records for information about Mengele.

Richard commented that the search is both helped and hindered by the present glare of publicity, including intensive interest on the Hill. In this connection he mentioned the activity of Senators Specter and Damato as well as the visit to Paraguay by Congresswoman Elizabeth Holtzman. The latter had resulted in a somewhat questionable commitment by the Government of Paraguay (GOP) to conduct an all-out search. The official GOP position remains firm and consistent: Mengele had lived in Paraguay until the mid-1960s as a citizen of that country; after his departure, perhaps to Brazil and thence Portugal, his Paraguayan citizenship had been revoked. Sifting through a mass of contradictory reports, Justice had been

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led to the tentative assumption that Mengele was probably (1) alive; (2) hiding in Paraguay. The rewards offered for his apprehension now added up to an impressive \$3.5 million. In light of that amount, it was surprising how few people had come forward so far, claiming to know Mengele's whereabouts.

On the international scene, the USG has entered into liaison with the governments of Israel and the Federal Republic of Germany, both of which have long had warrants out for Mengele's arrest. Richard expressed doubts about the seriousness of German and Israeli intentions to make an honest, major effort to find Mengele. As for the historical search, Justice has now obtained the Berlin Document Center records on Mengele and hopes to assemble all pertinent documents in the near future. Reflecting the above-described two-tiered approach, we will seek the formal cooperation of Latin American governments to provide access to the relevant documents, to explain their own involvement, if any, with Mengele, and to permit OSI to conduct appropriate interviews on their territory. The US Marshals, meanwhile, are discussing with US mission personnel ways to institute police-to-police liaison in the host countries.

Turning to Paraguay and the question of an approach to President Alfredo Stroessner, Richard observed that Stroessner is scheduled to visit German Chancellor Helmut Kohl in early July. The Germans have told us that Mengele is on the agenda. He questioned the political and optical implications of a Justice Department visit to Asuncion in close temporal proximity to Stroessner's German trip. Justice is weighing the merits of a high level (Secretary of State or White House) approach to Stroessner to open the door to our investigators. It was suggested that the question of the best approach to Stroessner might usefully be coordinated with the Germans and Israelis. We (INR) should explore with EUR whether and how to instruct Embassy Bonn to raise this question with the Germans.

The Counselor intervened to stress that timing is critical to this operation. Interest in Mengele had waxed and waned repeatedly over the postwar period and had never been greater than it is now. If we could not find Mengele at this juncture, we never would. In the ensuing exchange, Richard observed that in steadfastly denying any knowledge of Mengele's whereabouts, Stroessner might be trying to avoid possible embarrassment to himself and his government. Money from Mengele's very wealthy family, or narcotics, etc. might be involved. Ambassador McNeil (Deputy Director, INR) said that if we do find Mengele, the diplomatic track will come into play. Experience indicates that the GOP would respond to US pressure, but this would depend on the state of US-Paraguayan relations at that point.

If we cannot find Mengele, Richard said, Justice will have to try to offer negative proof; i.e., produce evidence to support the thesis that the man is dead and/or cannot be located anywhere. In any event, Justice will have to issue a public report on the investigation at some point. He added that scheduling difficulties

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made it necessary for him to postpone his projected June 3-8 visit to several Latin American capitals. He now hoped to lead a Justice Department team there about July 8.

Ambassador Davis arrived at this point and joined in the discussion. He emphasized that when asked about Mengele, Stroessner has firmly repeated the same story for many years: Mengele was not in Paraguay and there was no news of him. It was most unlikely that Stroessner could be prevailed upon to change his story, not least because of the major embarrassment this would cause him. As for his accessibility, the Ambassador said that a message from President Reagan, which Stroessner would promptly make public, would vastly outweigh any irritation Stroessner might feel at the prospect of being interviewed once again about Josef Mengele.

Ambassador Davis had found the following consensus about Mengele in the GOP: Mengele had lived openly in Paraguay until 1965 or 1966. He had not used an alias and had conducted his business under his own name. He had been seen regularly every week driving his jeep between the capital and nearby Incarnacion, where he lived. The Ambassador knew several people who had been Mengele's friends in those years -- a White Russian named Von Eckstein (who claimed to have warned Mengele when Israeli agents were in Paraguay to look for him), a woman named June Werner, and Mengele's lawyer, Morales. According to these sources, Mengele had traveled to Germany many times using his Paraguayan passport, and at least once or twice to the US. Stories to the contrary notwithstanding, the Mennonite mission in Paraguay probably did not hide Mengele; their involvement appeared to stem, rather, from their purchase of equipment from a Mengele Family enterprise. The Ambassador said that he had queried his German and Israeli colleagues in Asuncion about Mengele; they claimed to have no information. Turning to the GOP inquiry prompted by the Holtzman visit, Ambassador Davis said that the GOP claims to have opened an investigation but allegedly is waiting for names to be supplied by the Holtzman party. The names have not been sent, and no letters of understanding were exchanged between Holtzman and the GOP, an omission which the Ambassador described as an error by the Holtzman group.

The Ambassador suggested that Washington should prepare and transmit pertinent questions well ahead of Richard's visit to Asuncion. He proposed that the team meet first with Minister Martinado and then perhaps with President Stroessner. The Ambassador believed that while Stroessner might be irked by the subject, he would not refuse to meet with the team. Concluding, Ambassador Davis stressed that the Embassy takes the Mengele matter very seriously and will cooperate in any way it can. His COS has

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been briefed (and presumably instructed by CIA headquarters) and has placed a high priority on the investigation.

Ambassador McNeil said that he would not make a linkage between the OSI trip to Asuncion and Stroessner's Bonn trip; the former should take place as soon as possible. Ambassador Davis added that, knowing Stroessner, he would not rule out a last-minute cancellation of his visit to Germany, especially since the German President would probably be out of the country then. It was agreed that a message from President Reagan would certainly open the door to Stroessner; in any event, Richard added, the White House should be given the option whether or not to send a Presidential letter. Justice undertook to submit a draft to the White House. Meanwhile we would explore with EUR the question of enlisting German help in the approach to Stroessner.

Drafter: INR/IC:LHeichler

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